

YAYATI

King Yayati had stopped only to quench his thirst, but the forest well presented him with a beautiful bride! All he had to do now was treat her well, but womanly wiles worked their spell to destroy his happiness. It took a thousand years of indulgence to make him see the path to true contentment – and he realised that it did not lie in worldly pleasures.

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YAYATI

RETOLD FROM THE MAHABHARATA

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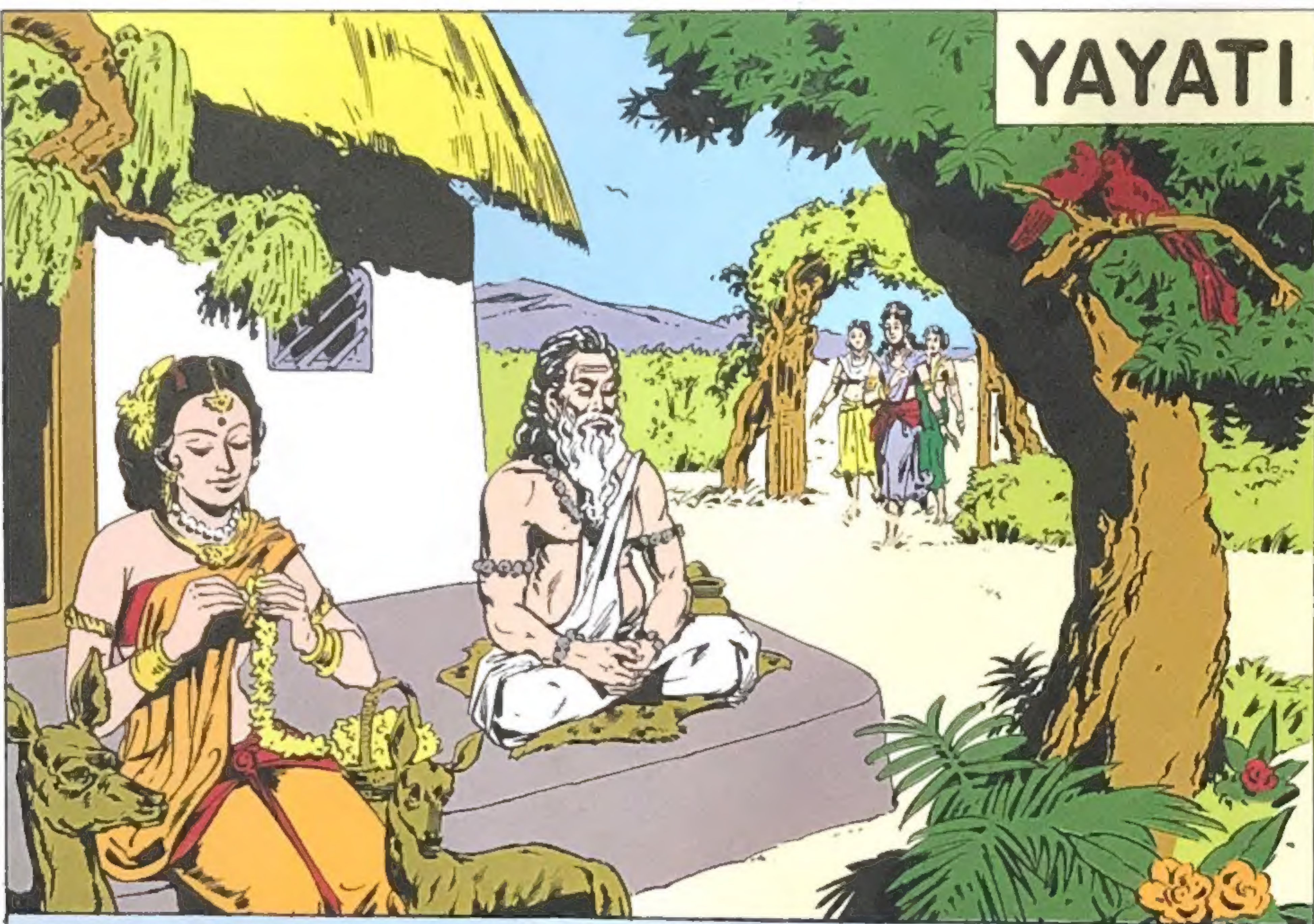


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YAYATI



DEVAYANI WAS THE ONLY DAUGHTER OF SHUKRACHARYA, THE PRECEPTOR OF VRISHA-PARVA, KING OF THE ASURAS. UNFORTUNATELY SHE WAS A SPOILT, WILFUL GIRL AS HER FATHER DOTTED ON HER, INDULGING HER EVERY WHIM AND FANCY.

ONE MORNING, SHARMISHTHA, THE ASURA PRINCESS, CALLED ON SHUKRACHARYA.

HOLY ONE, WE ARE GOING TO THE GARDEN OF THE GANDHARVAS* IN THE FOREST, TO SWIM IN THE LAKE THERE. MAY WE TAKE DEVAYANI WITH US?



DO SO BY ALL MEANS. BUT TAKE GOOD CARE OF HER.

I CERTAINLY WILL, HOLY ONE! I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU LOVE HER.



SHARMISHTHA AND DEVAYANI LEFT THE ASHRAM WITH THEIR FRIENDS.

*CELESTIAL MUSICIANS, A CLASS OF 'DEMI-GODS'

AS THE GIRLS APPROACHED THE LAKE, THE GARDEN RESOUNDED WITH THEIR GABBLE AND LAUGHTER.



THEY LEFT THEIR CLOTHES IN SEPARATE HEAPS ON THE BANK AND PLUNGED INTO THE LAKE.



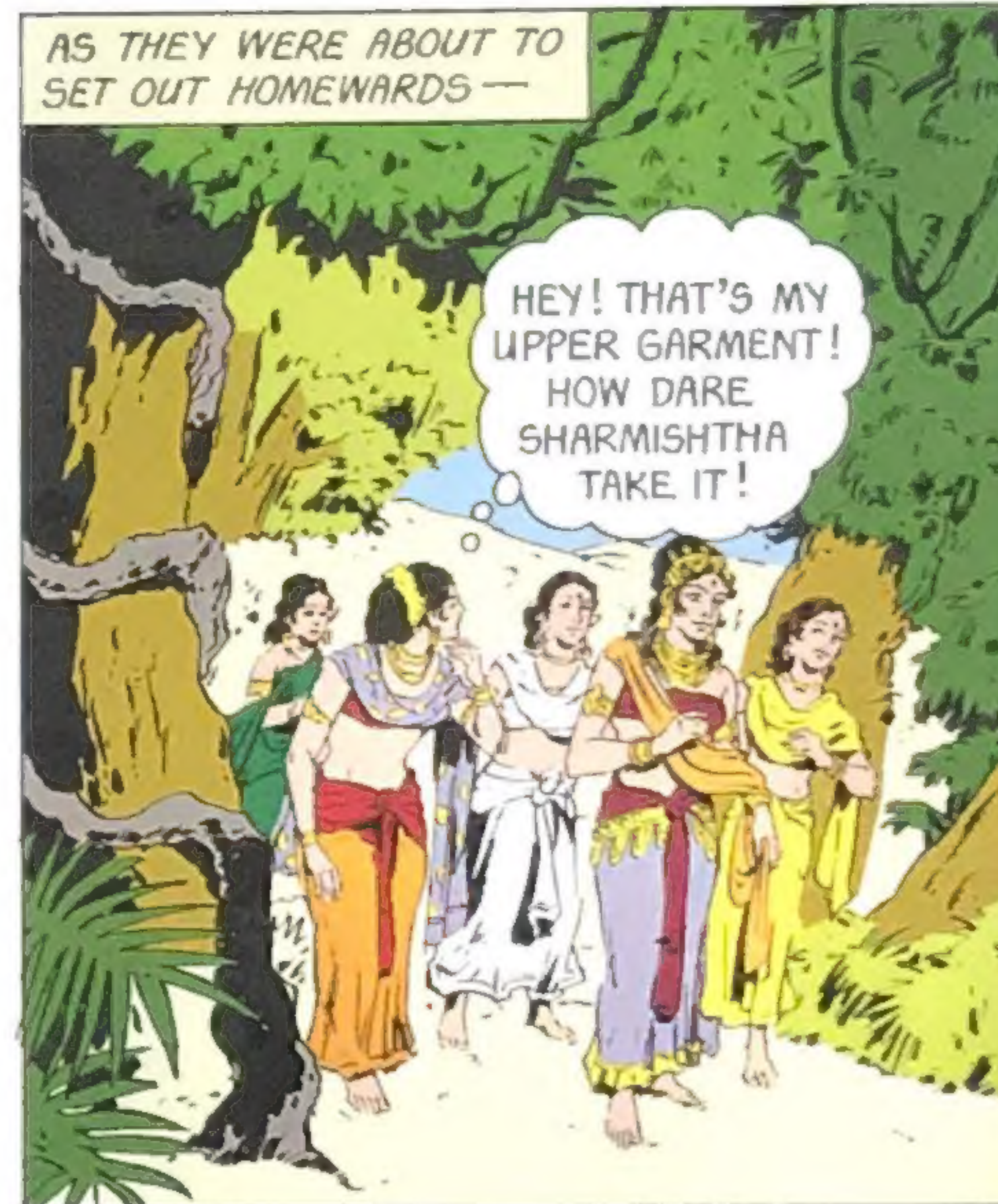
SUDDENLY, A STORM BROKE OUT AND SOON THE CLOTHES WERE ALL JUMBLED UP.



WHEN THEY CAME OUT OF THE LAKE, THE GIRLS HURRIEDLY SORTED OUT THEIR CLOTHES AND DRESSED THEMSELVES.

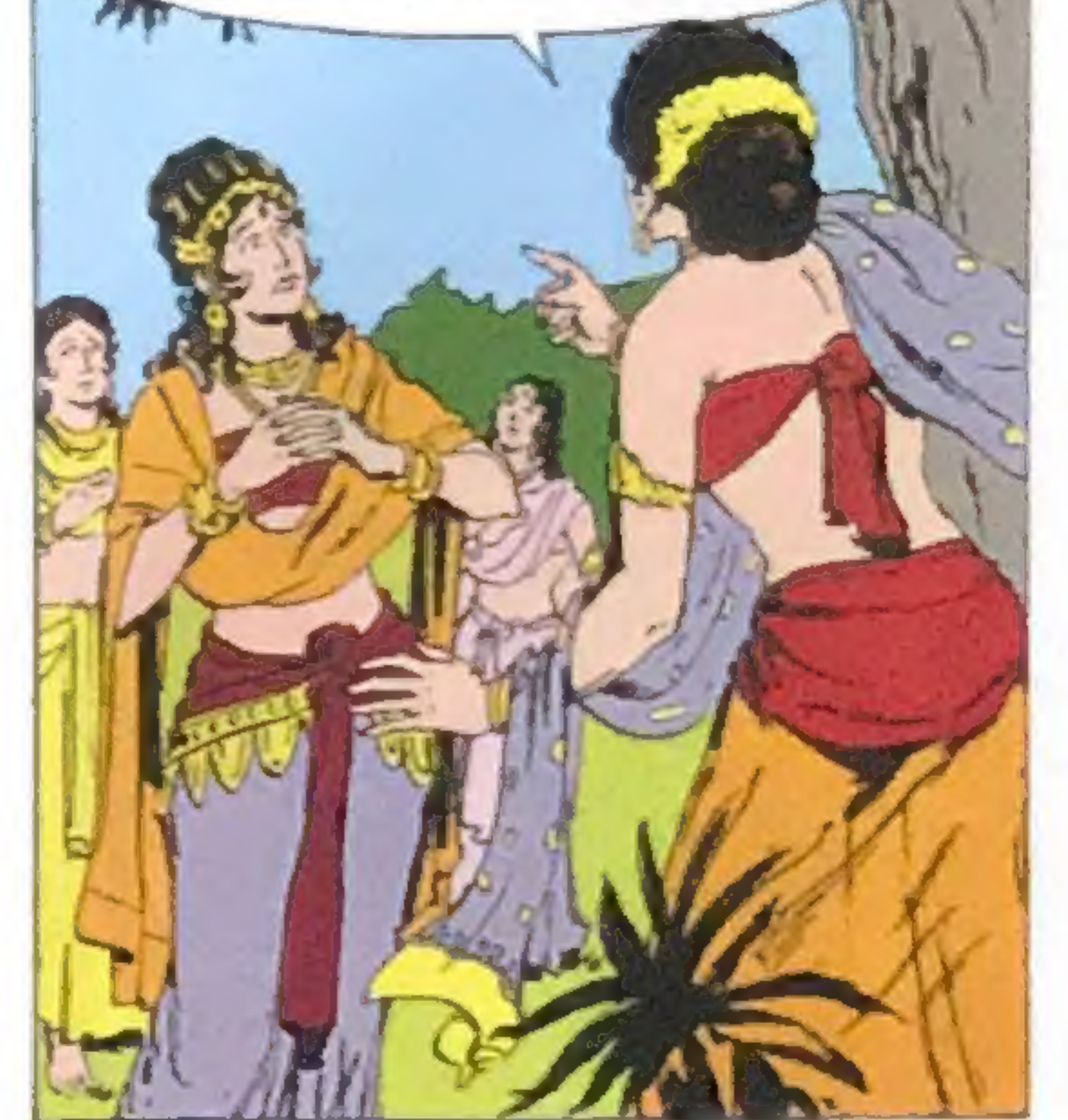


AS THEY WERE ABOUT TO SET OUT HOMEWARDS —



AND WORKING HERSELF UP INTO A FRENZY, DEVAYANI FLEW AT SHARMISHTHA.

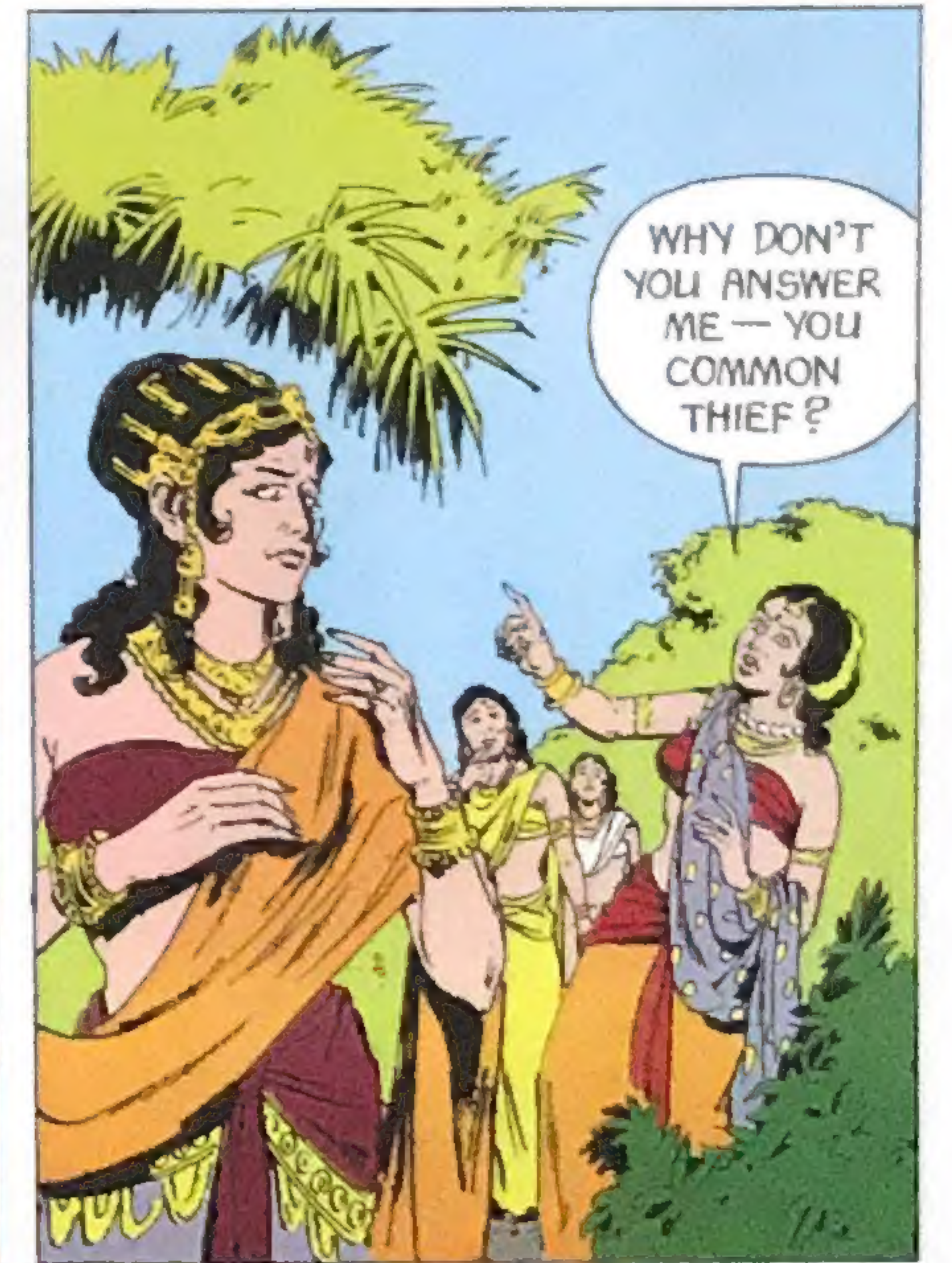
HOW DARE YOU TAKE MY GARMENT? DON'T YOU KNOW, YOU SHOULD NOT COVET WHAT BELONGS TO ANOTHER, YOU THIEF?



SHARMISHTHA WAS STUNNED BY THE HARSH WORDS.



WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER ME — YOU COMMON THIEF?





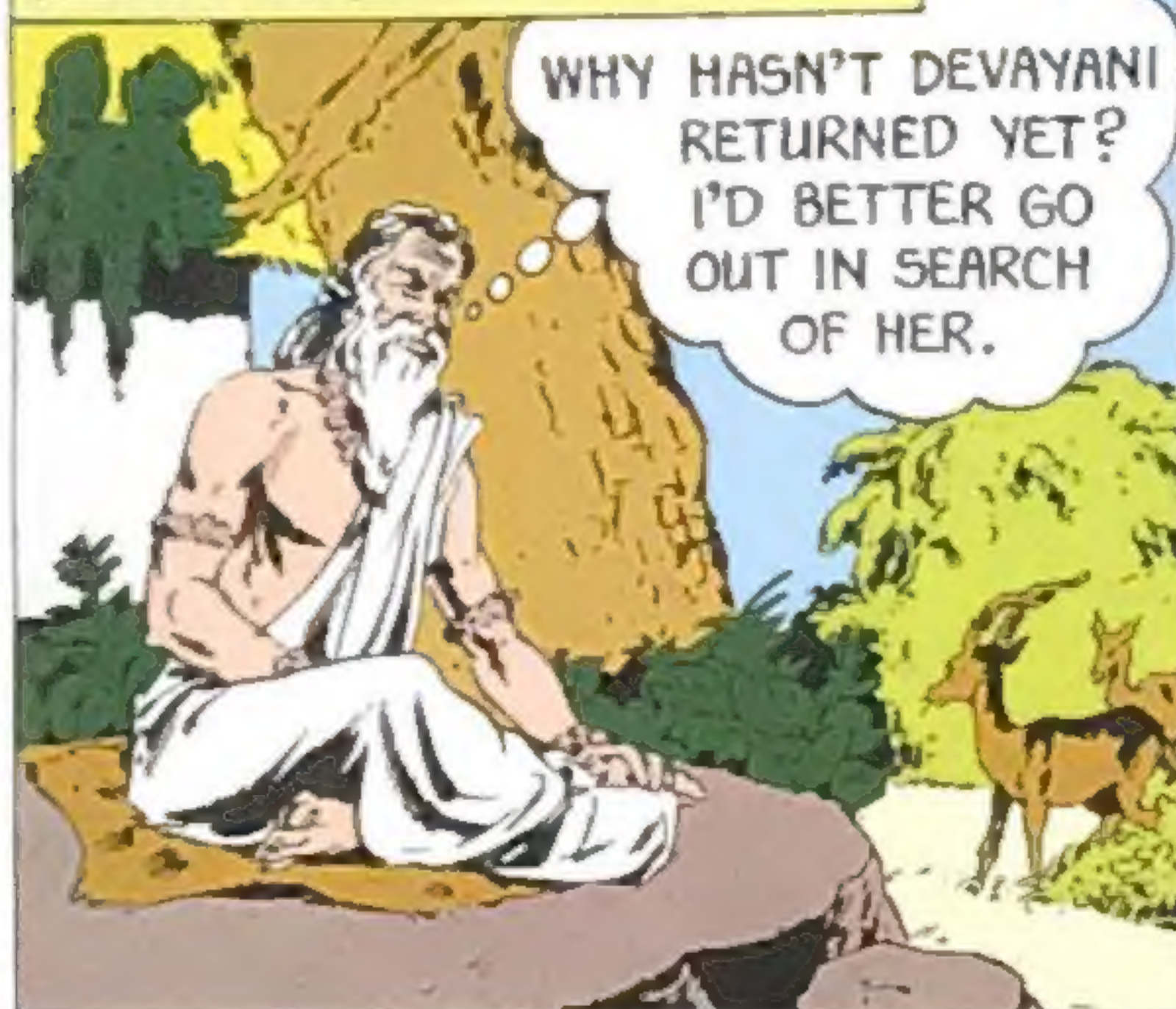
JUST THEN, KING YAYATI WHO HAD BEEN OUT HUNTING PASSED BY.



HE RODE UP TO THE WELL AND LOOKED INTO IT. SUDDENLY—



MEANWHILE, AT THE ASHRAM—



WHY HASN'T DEVAYANI RETURNED YET? I'D BETTER GO OUT IN SEARCH OF HER.



DEVAYANI!

AT LAST—



THERE SHE IS!
DEVAYANI!
MY DAUGHTER!

THE NEXT MOMENT—



CHILD, WHERE ARE THE OTHERS? WHY ARE YOU WEeping?

FATHER!

DEVAYANI TOLD HER FATHER WHAT HAD HAPPENED. THEN—



HER CRUEL WORDS HURT ME MORE THAN HER CRUEL ACT.



FATHER, SHE CALLED ME THE DAUGHTER OF A HIRED CHANTER OF PRAISES WHO BEGS AND ACCEPTS ALMS.



YOU ARE THE DAUGHTER OF ONE WHO PRAISES NONE BUT IS PRAISED BY ALL. COME HOME, DEVAYANI.



NO. I WON'T! I WANT TO GO AWAY FROM THIS KINGDOM.



ONE WHO OVERCOMES ANGER EVEN THOUGH THERE MAY BE CAUSE FOR IT, WILL EARN MERIT, NAY, SALVATION. COME HOME.

NO, FATHER. LET US GO AWAY. THE WISE SHOULD NOT DWELL AMONG THOSE WHO DO NOT RESPECT THEM.



HOW CAN I LIVE IN THIS KINGDOM AS A DEPENDANT OF THAT ARROGANT PRINCESS?



SHUKRACHARYA COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE HIS BELOVED DAUGHTER WEEP.

COMPOSE YOURSELF, MY DAUGHTER. SHE WHO HAS HURT YOU WILL NOT GO UNPUNISHED.

LEAVING DEVAYANI IN THE FOREST, SHUKRACHARYA LEFT FOR THE CAPITAL OF THE ASURAS.



WHEN HE STOMPED INTO THE PALACE, KING VRISHAPARVA GOT UP AND RECEIVED HIM WITH THE RESPECT DUE TO A PRECEPTOR.



VRISHAPARVA, I HAVE COME TO TELL YOU THAT I AM LEAVING YOUR KINGDOM — NEVER TO RETURN.



HAVE I UNWITTINGLY HURT YOUR FEELINGS?

DON'T ASK ME. ASK MY DAUGHTER.



AND WITHOUT UTTERING ANOTHER WORD, SHUKRACHARYA WALKED OUT.

HIS DAUGHTER? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

HE TURNED ROUND TO SEE SHARMISHTHA STANDING NEAR HIM.



FATHER, I AM TO BE BLAMED FOR THIS CALAMITY.

YOU?

WHEN SHARMISHTHA TOLD HIM ABOUT THE QUARREL SHE HAD WITH DEVAYANI —

SHARMISHTHA, YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE FALLEN A PREY TO ANGER.

I AM SORRY. I AM WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS.

VRISHAPARVA AND SHARMISHTHA LEFT FOR THE FOREST.



WHEN THEY REACHED THE FOREST—



HER ANGER APPEASED, DEVAYANI AND SHUKRACHARYA RETURNED TO THE ASHRAM.



A FEW DAYS LATER, DEVAYANI WENT ONCE AGAIN TO THE SAME FOREST WITH SHARMISHTHA AND THE OTHER MAIDS.



AFTER A WHILE —



SHARMISHTHA,
I'M TIRED.
PLEASE PRESS
MY FEET.

I'M COMING,
DEVAYANI.

JUST THEN, KING YAYATI HAPPENED TO PASS BY.



AH! ISN'T THAT
THE GIRL I
RESCUED FROM
THE WELL?

DEVAYANI TOO NOTICED HIM.

IT'S HIM! MY
SAVIOUR!



YAYATI APPROACHED DEVAYANI AND SHARMISHTHA.



MAY I KNOW
YOUR NAMES,
FAIR ONES?

I AM DEVAYANI,
THE DAUGHTER OF
SHUKRACHARYA.
AND SHE IS MY
MAID,
SHARMISHTHA.

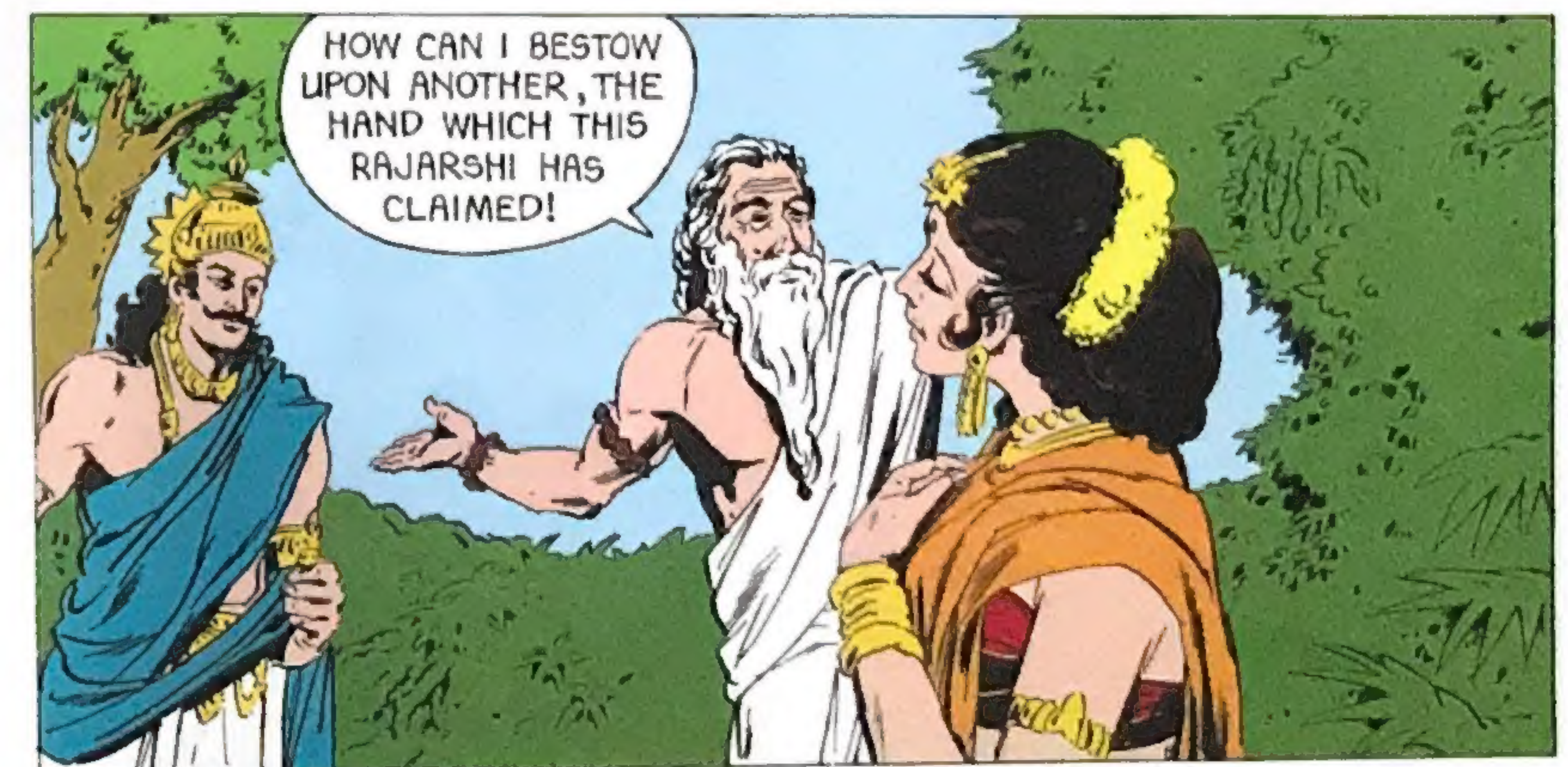
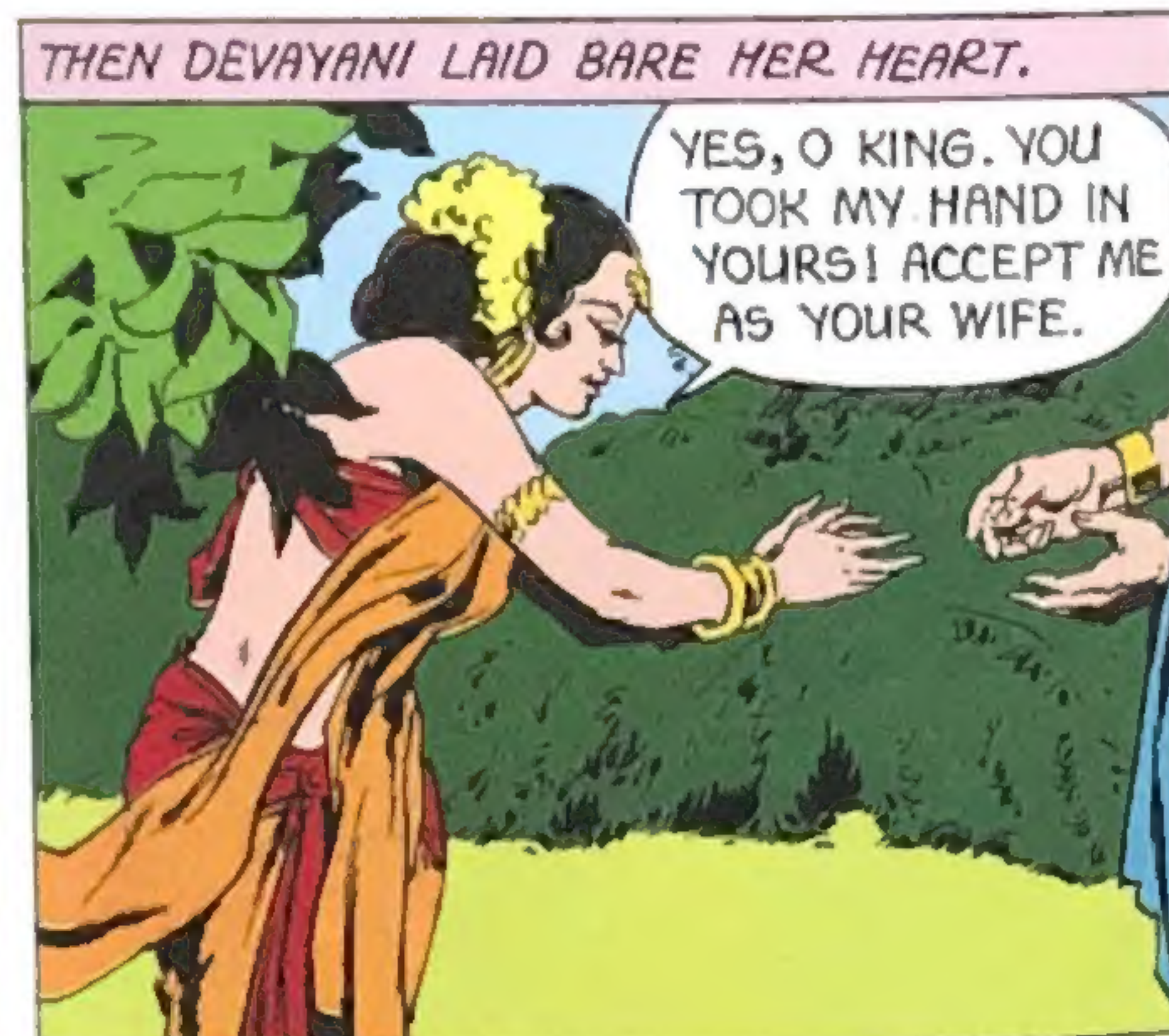


MAY I KNOW WHO
YOU ARE AND WHAT
HAS BROUGHT YOU
TO THESE PARTS?

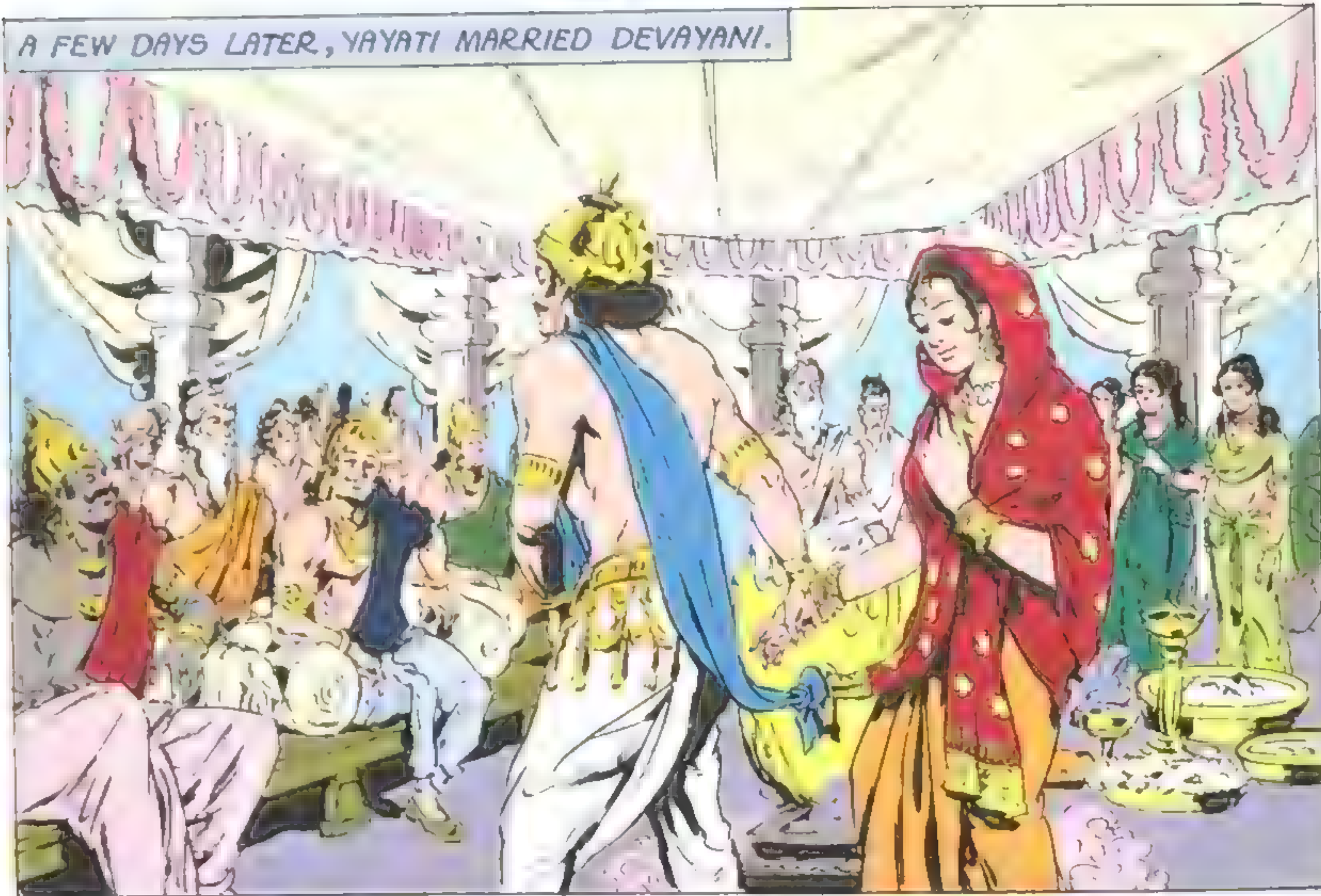


I AM KING YAYATI, THE
SON OF NAHUSHA.
TIRED AND THIRSTY
AFTER A LONG HUNT,
I HAVE COME HERE
TO QUENCH MY
THIRST AT THE
WELL.





A FEW DAYS LATER, YAYATI MARRIED DEVAYANI.



WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR THEM TO TAKE LEAVE OF SHUKRACHARYA —

YAYATI, TAKE CARE OF DEVAYANI. SHE IS DEARER TO ME THAN LIFE.

I WILL, REVERED ONE.

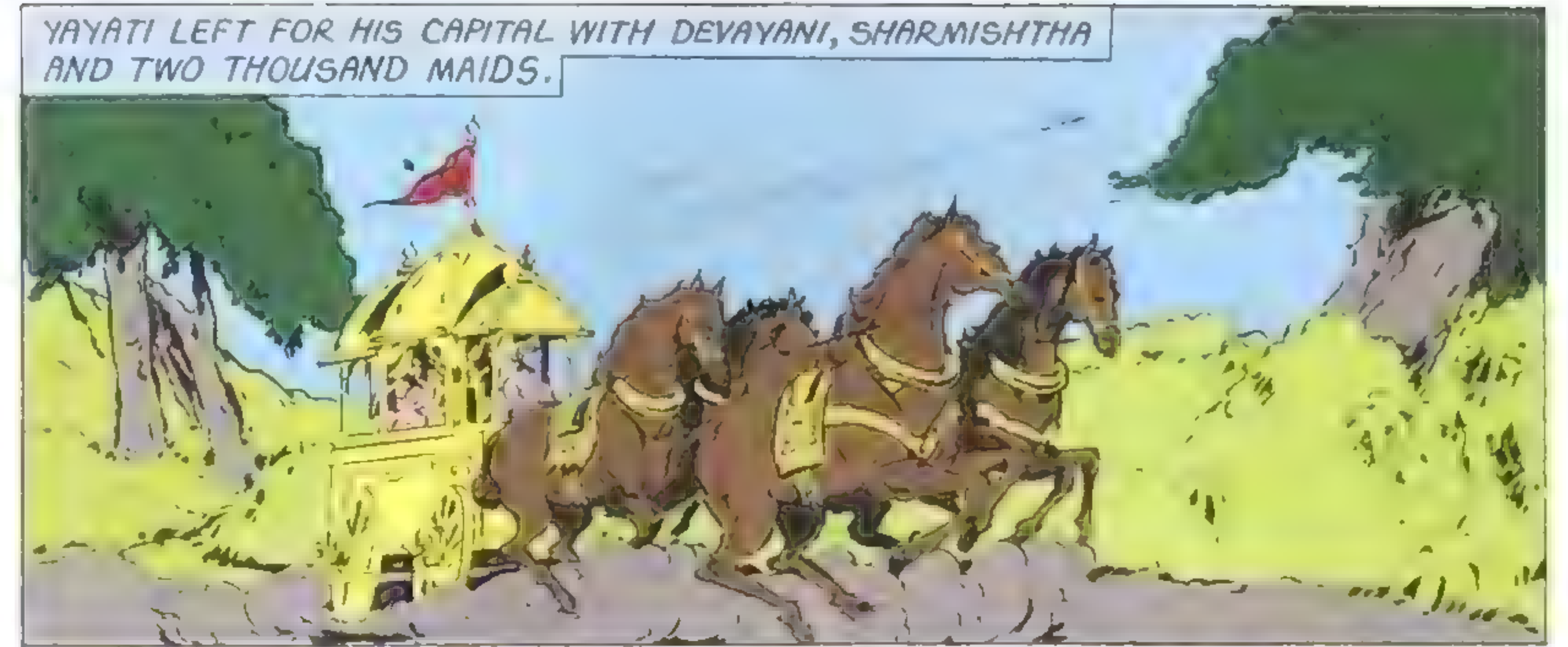


KEEP HER HAPPY. NEVER HURT HER BY YOUR WORDS OR DEEDS.

I ASSURE YOU, I WON'T, HOLY ONE.



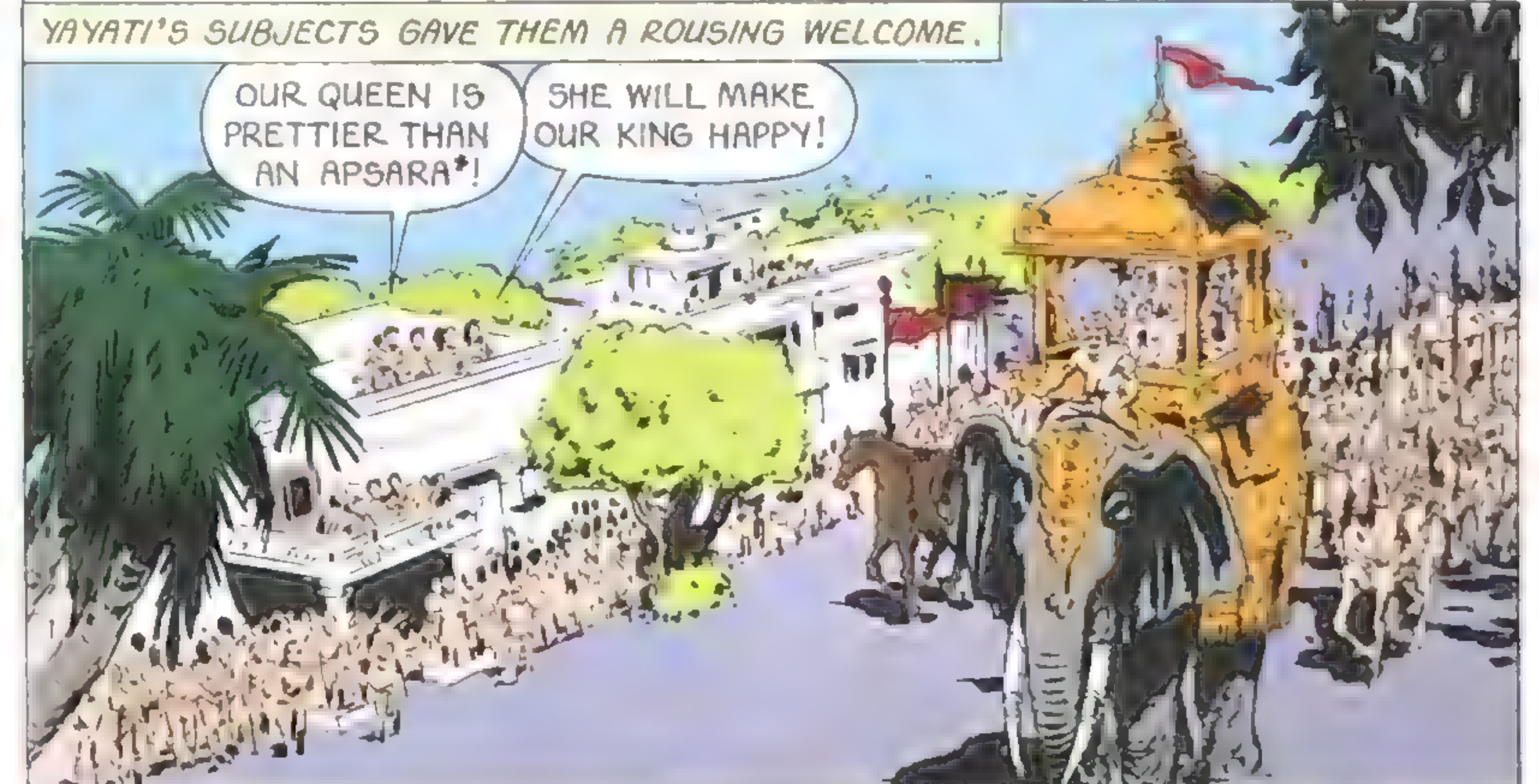
YAYATI LEFT FOR HIS CAPITAL WITH DEVAYANI, SHARMISHTHA AND TWO THOUSAND MAIDS.



YAYATI'S SUBJECTS GAVE THEM A ROUSING WELCOME.

OUR QUEEN IS PRETTIER THAN AN APSARA*!

SHE WILL MAKE OUR KING HAPPY!



WHEN YAYATI REACHED HIS PALACE —

MY LORD, ALTHOUGH SHARMISHTHA HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME AS A MAID, SHE IS LIKE A SISTER TO ME. PLEASE HAVE A PALACE BUILT FOR HER.

HOW GENEROUS YOU ARE, DEVAYANI!





ONE DAY, YAYATI WENT ON A HUNT.



WHILE RETURNING, HE STRAYED INTO SHARMISHTHA'S GARDEN.

WHO COULD THIS BEAUTIFUL ONE BE? OH! IT'S SHARMISHTHA!



SHARMISHTHA APPROACHED HIM.

WELCOME, O KING!

SHARMISHTHA, HOW ARE YOU? ARE YOU HAPPY?



HOW COULD I BE, O KING, IN A HOUSE WHERE A CHILD'S LAUGHTER IS NOT HEARD?



O KING, I BEG YOU, ACCEPT ME AS YOUR WIFE AND ENABLE ME TO BECOME A MOTHER OF SONS AS BRAVE AND ACCOMPLISHED AS YOU.



YAYATI WAS TAKEN ABACK.

HOW CAN I, SHARMISHTHA? I AM MARRIED TO DEVAYANI.

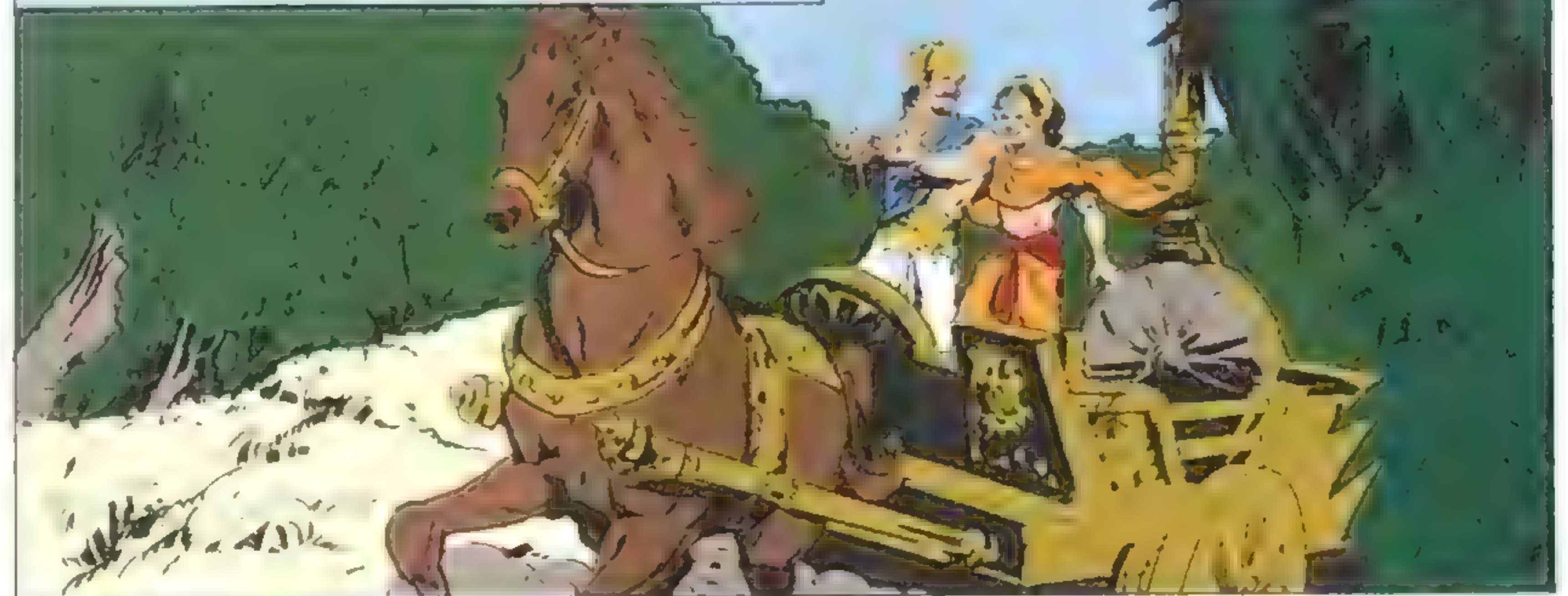
OUR SCRIPTURES ALLOW A KING TO MARRY MANY TIMES.





* MUTUAL CONSENT SANCTIFIED A GANDHARVA MARRIAGE

DEVAYANI, HOWEVER, WAS UNAWARE OF ALL THIS. ONE DAY, A FEW YEARS LATER, SHE ACCOMPANIED YAYATI TO THE FOREST.



JUST THEN SHARMISHTHA CAME THERE.



MY HUSBAND HAS MARRIED SHARMISHTHA WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE. THEY HAVE MADE A FOOL OF ME.



O KING, YOU HAVE DECEIVED ME! NOT A MOMENT LONGER WILL I STAY WITH YOU!

PLEASE LISTEN, DEVAYANI...



DEVAYANI, COME BACK!



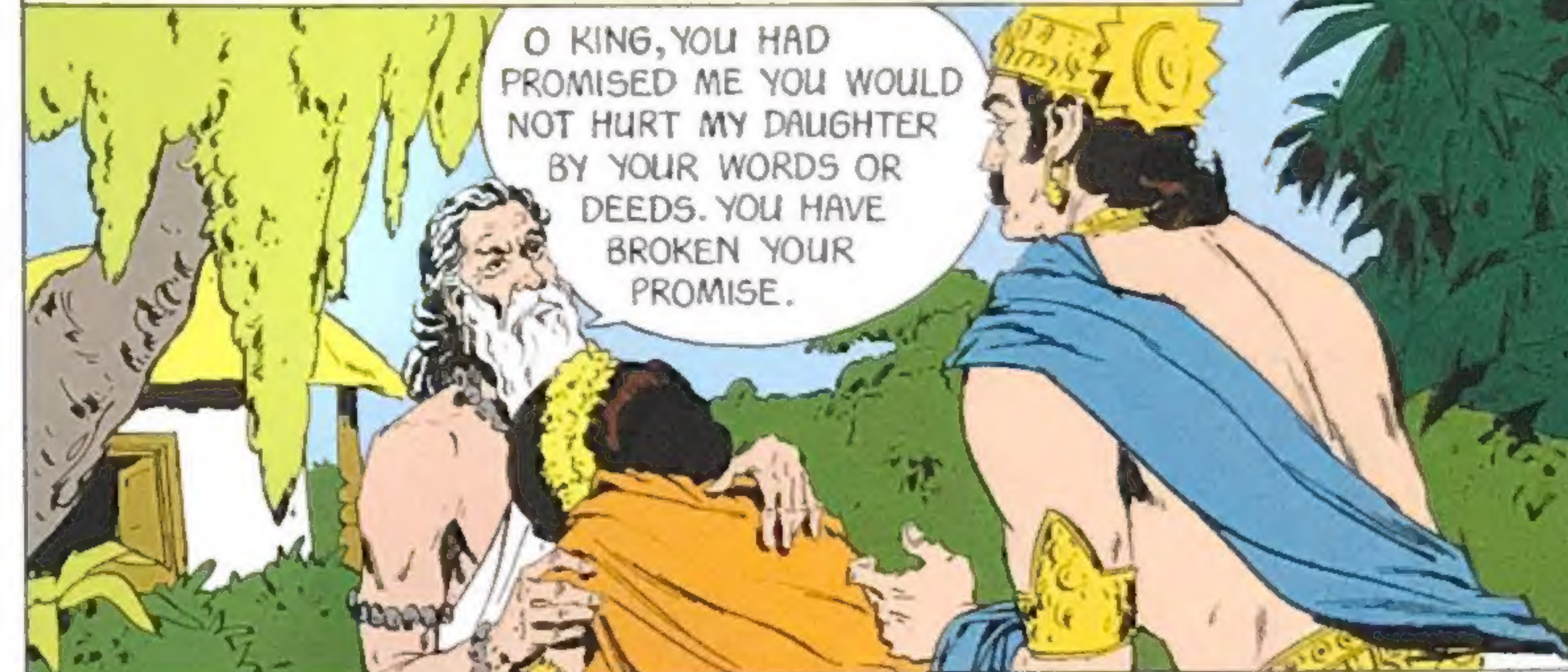
DEVAYANI, HOWEVER, DID NOT STOP TILL SHE REACHED HER FATHER'S ASHRAM.



FATHER, I'VE BEEN DECEIVED BY MY HUSBAND.



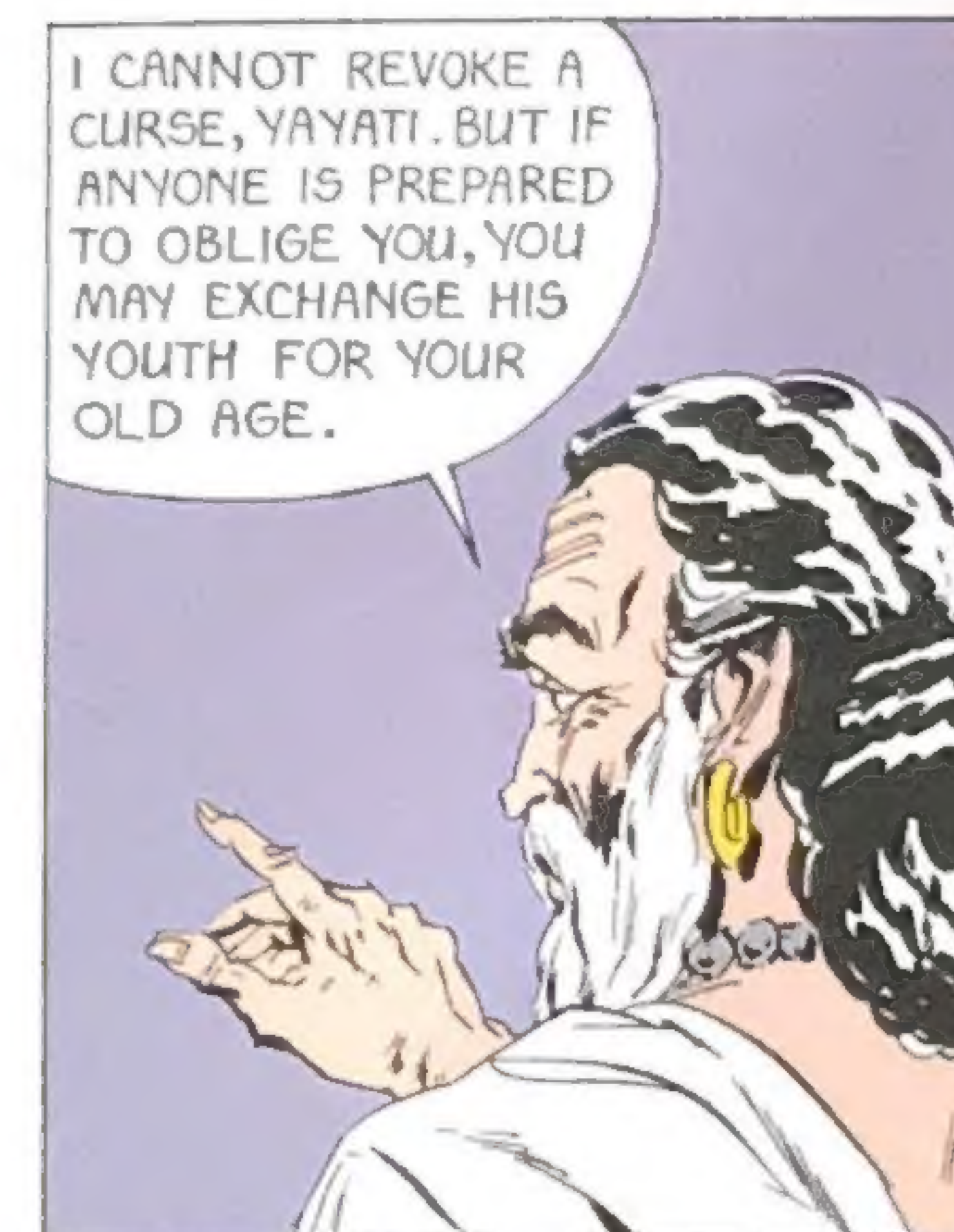
JUST THEN, YAYATI WHO HAD FOLLOWED HIS WIFE, CAME THERE.



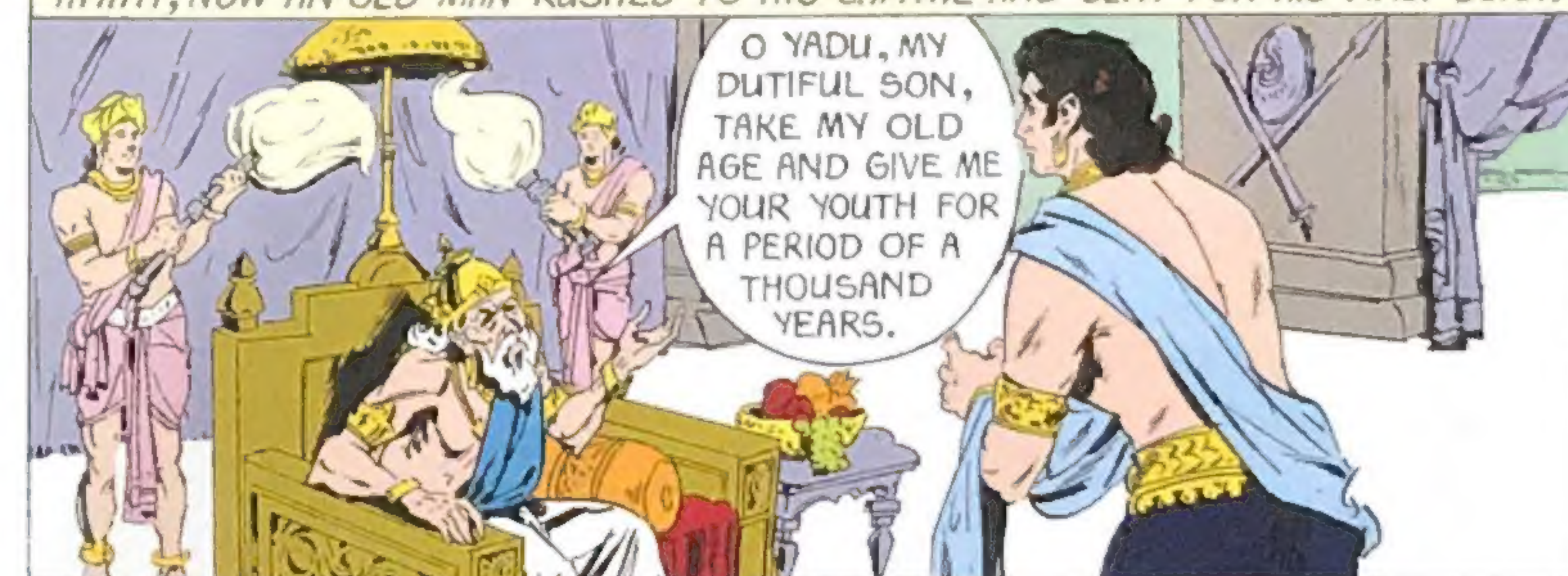
SINCE IT WAS THE CURSE OF YOUTH THAT PROMPTED YOU TO DO SO, MAY YOU LOSE YOUR YOUTH AND GROW OLD THIS MINUTE.

NO!





YAYATI, NOW AN OLD MAN RUSHED TO HIS CAPITAL AND SENT FOR HIS FIRST-BORN.



YAYATI'S REQUEST WAS TURNED DOWN BY HIS NEXT THREE SONS AS WELL. AT LAST HE APPROACHED THE YOUNGEST.

PURU, YOU ARE MY ONLY HOPE. OR WILL YOU ALSO...

NO, FATHER, I WON'T.

I WILL GLADLY EXCHANGE MY YOUTH FOR YOUR OLD AGE. TAKE MY YOUTH, AND RETAIN IT AS LONG AS YOU DESIRE.

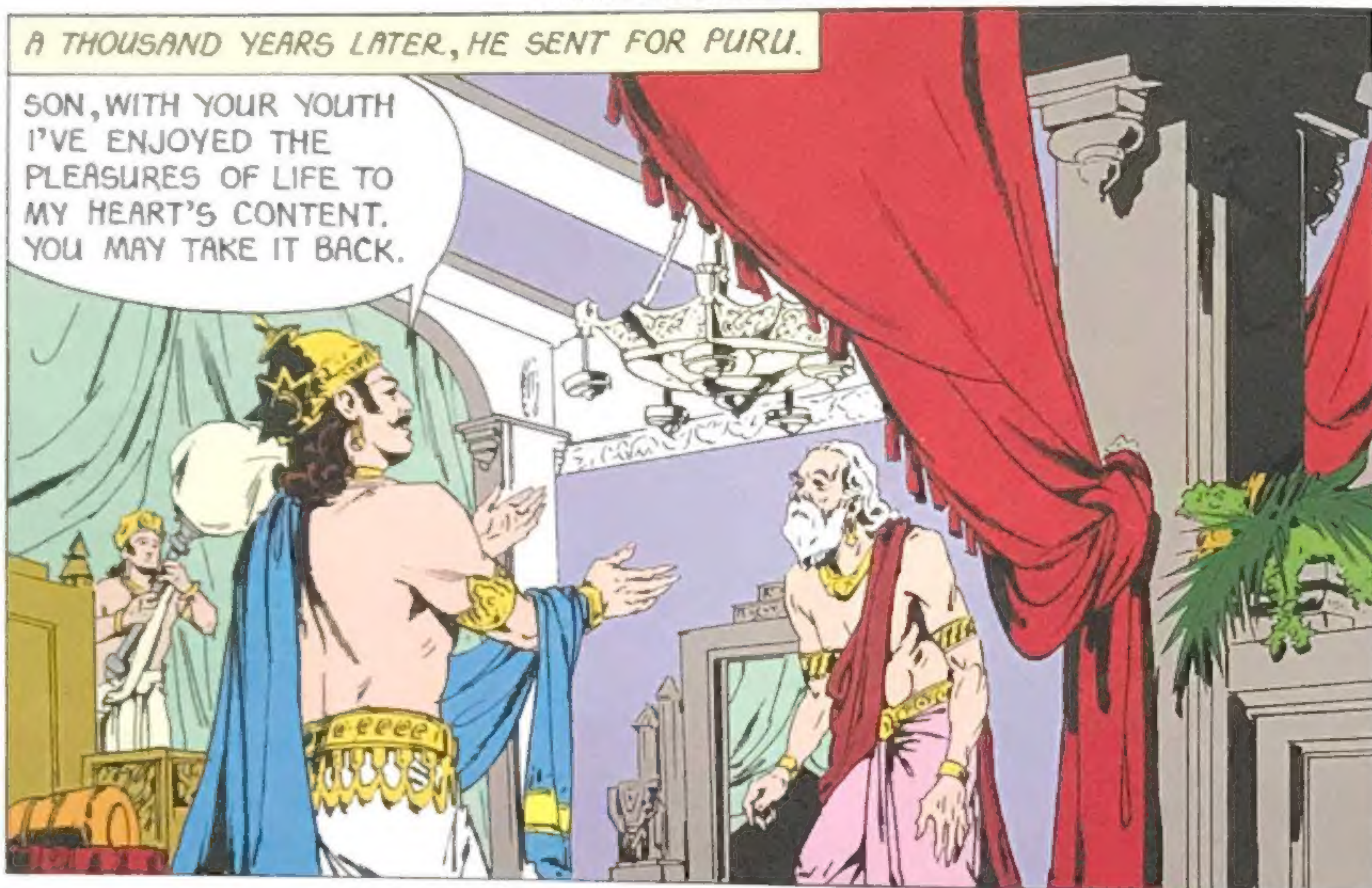
THE NEXT MOMENT, YAYATI BECAME A YOUNG MAN AND PURU AN OLD ONE.

SON, I WILL GIVE BACK YOUR YOUTH AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS. AND THEN YOU SHALL BE THE KING.

YAYATI THEN RESUMED HIS LIFE OF PLEASURE.

A THOUSAND YEARS LATER, HE SENT FOR PURU.

SON, WITH YOUR YOUTH I'VE ENJOYED THE PLEASURES OF LIFE TO MY HEART'S CONTENT. YOU MAY TAKE IT BACK.



FATHER, WOULD YOU LIKE TO RETAIN MY YOUTH FOR ANOTHER THOUSAND YEARS? PLEASE DO, IF YOU SO DESIRE.

NO, PURU. I HAVE FOUND THAT DESIRES ARE NEVER GRATIFIED BY INDULGENCE.

"ON THE OTHER HAND WITH INDULGENCE, THEY ONLY FLARE UP LIKE FIRE FED WITH LIBATIONS OF SACRIFICIAL GHEE."



I SHALL SPEND THE REST OF MY DAYS IN MEDITATION. TAKE BACK YOUR YOUTH.



AND THE NEXT MOMENT, PURU REGAINED HIS YOUTH AND YAYATI HIS OLD AGE. HE INSTALLED PURU ON THE THRONE...



...AND WENT TO THE FOREST WHERE HE BEGAN TO MEDITATE UPON BRAHMAN, THE ULTIMATE REALITY.

